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BOOK NOTICES.

Actual Africa; or, The Coming Continent. A Tour of Exploration.
By Frank Vincent. With Map and over One Hundred Illustrations. 8vo. New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1895.

With this volume of 500 pages, Mr. Vincent brings to a close the work of twenty-five years dedicated to a full and systematic tour of the globe. Fifteen of these years were spent in actual travel, as follows: One in the great islands and archipelagoes; two in the United States and British America; three in Europe; three in Asia; three in Central and South America; and three in Africa.

It is needless to add that Mr. Vincent travelled for the love of it, that he was interested in all the sights he saw, and that his book is a record of real and vivid impressions. He tells his story in an unaffected way, and he treats his reader with respect.

The illustrations are nearly all good.

Distribution of the Magnetic Declination in Alaska and Adjacent Waters for the year 1895, with one Chart. A report by C. A. Schott, Assistant (U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Bulletin No. 34.) 8vo. Washington, 1895.

Up to the year 1892 it was believed that in south-eastern Alaska, and even as far south as the State of Washington, the direction of the magnetic needle was either stationary, or moving slightly to the westward; but observations made since that time at Sitka and Fort Wrangell, at Seattle and Tacoma, and the discussion of observations made at Esquimalt, Vancouver Island, between the years 1858 and 1892, establish the fact of an increasing easterly declination for those points and the adjacent regions. The observations of 1889 and 1890 at Fort Yukon, in the interior, showed a declination decreasing by a few minutes per annum, in accord with the easterly decline along the shores of Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean.

The chart exhibits the isogonic curves for 1895, constructed by the analytical method.

Die Länder des Islâm nach Chinesischen Quellen, von Prof. Dr. Friedrich Hirth. 1. (Supplément au Volume V du "T'oung-Pao.") 8vo. Leiden, 1894.

This first part of Dr. Hirth's work has had the advantage of revision and annotation by Dr. M. J. de Goeje, the distinguished

professor of Arabic in the University of Leyden. The paper was written at Shunking, on the upper Yangtse-Kiang, not many hundred miles from the frontier of Tibet, and without the help of much-needed books of reference on Arabic matters.

Dr. Hirth's argument is that the Chinese notices of the Mohamadan countries are as correct and copious and, when rightly taken, as intelligible as the Arabic accounts of China. He goes even further when he asserts that, notwithstanding all that has been accomplished by Yule for the elucidation of Marco Polo, the best yet remains to be done. We shall have to take his word for it, and continue to believe in Sir Henry until we see the better work.

The Chinese author of the 14th century, translated by Dr. Hirth, gives the following description of Mecca:

The land of Mecca is reached after 80 days' journey westward from Ma-lo-pa (Arab capital city, not identified). This is the place where the Buddha *Ma-hsia-wu* (Mohammed) was born. In the Buddha's house (the Kaaba) the mason-work is of jade, of all colours. Every year, when the death-day of the Buddha comes, the people gather here from all the lands of the *Ta-shih* (Arabs) to do him reverence, and on this occasion they emulate each other in bringing presents of gold, silver, jewels and precious stones; the house also is then newly covered with silk brocade. Farther inland (in Medina?) is found the Buddha's grave. There shines continually, by day and by night, a halo so bright that no one can approach it; whoever passes by shuts his eyes. It is said that he, who in his dying hour rubs his breast with earth taken from this grave, will be born again through the power of the Buddha.

Meteorology, Weather, and Methods of Forecasting, Description of Meteorological Instruments and River Flood Predictions in the United States, by Thomas Russell, U. S. Assistant Engineer. 8vo. New York and London, 1895.

Mr. Russell's preface is pessimistic. He says:

The hopes that were once entertained that a precise knowledge of coming weather could be gained from the weather-map has (have) not been fully realized. Cases are comparatively rare where it can be of use in predicting the weather. There are not more than six to twelve occasions in the course of a year for any part of the country where successful predictions can be made, and for some places successful predictions are never possible.

This sends us back to the *Farmer's Almanac*, but Mr. Russell does not stand by his preface. He has had long experience in the Signal Service and the Weather Bureau, and his chapter on Weather Predictions shows that he is a master of the subject. Very instructive, also, are the 75 pages devoted to Rivers and Floods and River-Stage Predictions.

His aim is to give almost everything that is considered to be of